

# Contact with relatives could lead to Mandalay 100th anniversary celebration

During the year the Society has been in touch with great grand children of Captain Emile Tonnessen (pictured right), the captain of the *Mandalay*.

As a result, it is possible that descendants of Captain Tonnessen could come to Walpole in 2011 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the ship wreck.

Arne Kolbjornsen who lives in Minnesota in the US, wrote "Recently I learned that the ship was beached near Walpole, on what is now called Mandalay Beach. I am seeking any and all information about the *Mandalay* from the time of beaching to the present.

"I was told that the captain's log exists and would like to know how I would be able to get any insight as to what it might contain.

"Is it possible that some of it has been reprinted and available?

"Is it also possible that there are any newspaper accounts from that time frame, and are there photos of the *Mandalay* that were taken of the ship from the time of the beaching to the present? I am aware that occasionally, at low tides, some of the wreckage can still be seen.

"If you have anyone with this information, or have other sources that I might research, I would really appreciate corresponding with them."

While we were not able to help with locating the Ship's log, we were able to send Arne plenty of photographs, newspaper articles and other information about the wreck from our files, including the detailed account in "In Praise of A National Park" by Geoff and Lee Fernie.

Arne replied: "I can not thank you enough for the fantastic information and pictures that you have sent to me.

"The pictures are unbelievable, and the accounts of the history of the area by Geoff and Lee Fernie were so enlightening. I have forwarded all of your emails to my fellow researcher, my cousin Suzy, who lives in New Hampshire.

"We are both so blown away by the information we have learned about the *Mandalay*. We are now in contact with family members in Norway hoping that they will get a similar interest, and who knows what info. we come up with.



"I have been in touch with the National Library of Australia, and they have given me other sources to research. I will definitely compile all that I learn, together with all the pictures that we receive, and I will definitely send you a copy.

"I have suggested to my cousin that perhaps we could interest other family members in a trip to Mandalay Beach in 2011 which will be the one hundredth anniversary. Wouldn't that be wonderful? If that were to happen we would need to research places to stay and things to do. If you could suggest some accommodations, that would be great. And of course, that would give us a chance to meet you all in person and give you a special thanks for all your help."

Since then we have sent Arne a lot more information, including Kevin Benson's recollections of what he was told about his grandfather, Charles Benson, who employed some of the *Mandalay's* crew at Bow Bridge after the wreck and helped them to return to Norway.

We also sent photographs of the head of the *Mandalay's* figurehead, which has what looks like a bullet hole in it. An official report of the wreck referred to a tradition of "executing" the figurehead of a wrecked ship.



*The crew of the Mandalay at Bow Bridge*